

On the Application of

giving the most lively aspect to the objects which must attract them in order to draw forth into activity the faculties of our nature. It may also contribute to prepare the mind for the exercise of that faith which converses with things unseen, but converses with them through the medium of those ideal forms in which imagination presents them, and in which only a strong imagination can present them impressively.* And I should deem it the indication of a character not destined to excel in the liberal, the energetic, or the devout qualities, if I observed in the youthful age a close confinement of thought to bare truth and minute accuracy, with an entire aversion to the splendours, amplifications, and excursions of fancy. The opinion is warranted by instances of persons so distinguished in youth, who have become subsequently very intelligent indeed, in a certain way, but dry, cold, precise, devoted to detail, and incapable of being carried away one moment by any inspiration of the beautiful or the sublime. They seem to have only the bare intellectual mechanism of the human mind, without the addition of what is to give it life and sentiment. They give one an impression analogous to that of the leafless trees observed in winter, admirable for the distinct exhibition of their branches and minute ramifications so clearly defined on the sky, but destitute of all the green soft luxury of foliage which is requisite to make a perfect tree. And the affections which may exist in such minds seem to have a bleak abode, somewhat like those bare deserted nests which you have often seen in such trees.

If, indeed, the signs of this exclusive understanding indicated also such an extraordinary vigour of the faculty, as to promise a very great mathematician or metaphysician, one would perhaps be content to forego some of the properties which form a complete mind, for the sake of this pre-eminence of one of its endowments ; even though the person were to be so defective in sentiment and fancy, that, as the

* The Divine Being is the only one of these objects which a Christian would wish it possible to contemplate without the aid of imagination ; and every reflective man has felt how difficult it is to apprehend even this Object "without the intervention of an image. In thinking of the transactions and personages of history, the final events of time foretold by prophecy, the state of good men in another world, the superior ranks of intelligent agents, &c., he has often had occasion to wish his imagination much more vivid.